DemocracyNext

Assembling an Assembly Guide

Introduction

The Assembling an Assembly Guide is a resource for any institution, organisation, city administration, or policy maker interested in running a Citizens' Assembly. It is also a useful tool for citizens and activists wishing to learn more about what a Citizens' Assembly is and how it works, in order to strengthen their advocacy efforts.
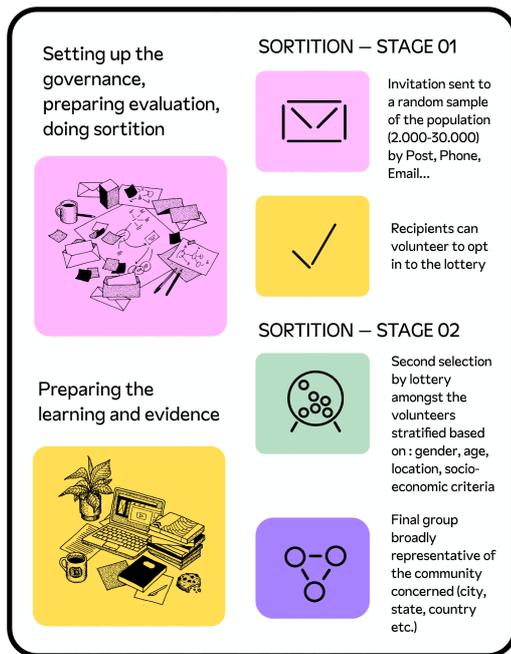
This 3-stage guide will accompany you through the different steps of designing, running, and acting on the results of a Citizens' Assembly. It draws on and points to a curated selection of the best available resources. From deciding how to choose and define an issue, to setting the budget, timeline, and which people to involve, this guide aims to make it a simple and clear process.

Prepared by DemocracyNext, a non-profit, non-partisan research and action institute founded by the people who developed the OECD Deliberative Democracy Toolbox, it embeds the OECD Good Practice Principles of running a high-quality Assembly. The guide will be continuously updated and enriched with new resources.
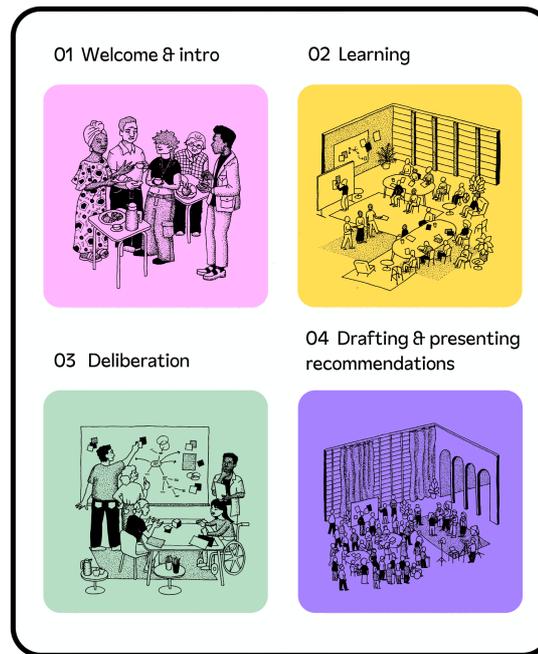
Whilst we hear endlessly about the crisis of democracy, something remarkable and hopeful has been happening right under our noses: a new kind of democracy is taking root. Over the last few decades, governments have been reaping the benefits of Citizens' Assemblies - a democratic model that has been tested, widely implemented, and even embedded into public decision-making as new institutions connected to power and underpinned by a legal basis.

A **Citizens' Assembly** is a group of people selected by lottery who are broadly representative of a community. They spend significant time learning and collaborating through facilitated deliberation to find common ground and form collective recommendations for policy makers, decision makers, and the community. These Assemblies are sometimes called Citizens' Juries, Panels, or Councils depending on their size and the country where they are taking place.

I. Before

Setting up the governance, preparing evaluation, doing sortition

Preparing the learning and evidence

SORTITION — STAGE 01

Invitation sent to a random sample of the population (2.000-30.000) by Post, Phone, Email...

Recipients can volunteer to opt in to the lottery

SORTITION — STAGE 02

Second selection by lottery amongst the volunteers stratified based on : gender, age, location, socio-economic criteria

Final group broadly representative of the community concerned (city, state, country etc.)

II. During

01 Welcome & intro

02 Learning

03 Deliberation

04 Drafting & presenting recommendations

III. After

Follow-up: Response to & implementation of recommendations by the authority, communication, evaluation, monitoring

Making it ongoing
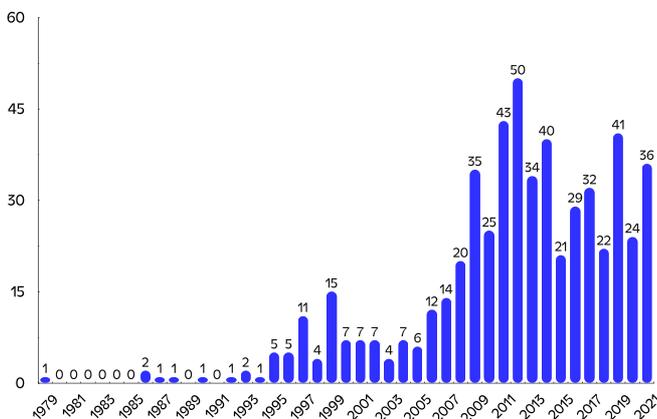

Grounded in ancient Athenian practices and proven to work in the modern context, Citizens' Assemblies have been used over 600 times at a local, regional, national, and international scale.

The "deliberative wave" has been building since the 1980s, gaining momentum since 2010

Citizens' Assemblies have been strikingly successful in tackling complex policy problems and values-based dilemmas, from constitutional changes around same-sex marriage and abortion, to urban planning, clean energy, and climate change.

Citizen's Assemblies have tackled a wide range of policy issues
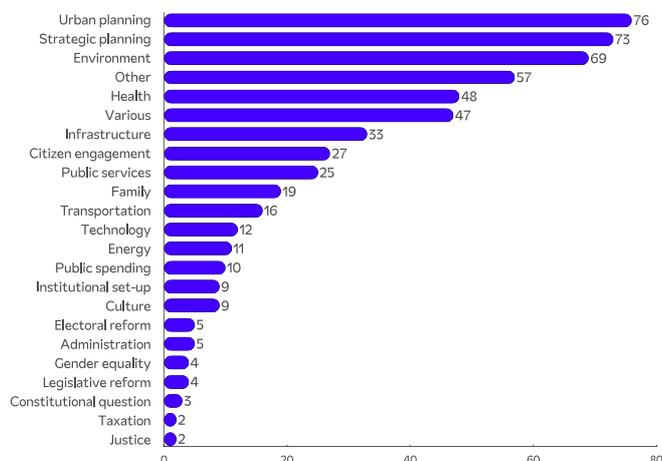
🔗	**OECD Deliberative Democracy Toolbox** Open external link

Why run a Citizens' Assembly?

As governance systems are failing to address some of society's most pressing issues and trust between citizens and government is faltering, Citizens' Assemblies embody the potential of democratic renewal. They create the democratic spaces for everyday people to grapple with the complexity of policy issues, listen to one another, and find common ground. In doing so, they create the conditions to overcome polarisation and strengthen societal cohesion. They bring out the collective intelligence of society — the principle that many diverse people will come to better decisions than more homogenous groups.

OECD research has shown that well-designed Citizens' Assemblies help public decision makers take hard decisions and enhance trust, because they:

01

Lead to better policy outcomes as deliberation results in considered public judgements rather than public opinions.

02

Allow decision-makers to tackle more complex problems that require long-term solutions which go beyond electoral cycles.

03

Provide greater legitimacy to make hard choices. Assemblies help policy makers better understand public priorities, and the values and reasons behind them, and identify where consensus is and is not feasible.

04

Build public trust in government and democratic institutions by giving citizens a significant role to play in public decision making. People are more likely to trust a decision that has been influenced by ordinary people than one made solely by government.

05

Help counteract polarisation and disinformation. Echo chambers that intensify division and polarisation do not operate in deliberative conditions.

06

Strengthen integrity and prevent corruption by ensuring that those with money and power cannot have undue influence on a public decision.

07

Make governance more inclusive by opening the door to a much more diverse group of people. Citizens' Assemblies, with their use of selection by lottery, includes people who typically would not contribute to public policy and decision making.

08

Signal civic respect and empower people. Engaging people in deliberation strengthens their political efficacy (the belief that one can understand and influence political affairs).

There is no time to waste. The latest V-Dem report has found that advances in global levels of democracy made over the last 35 years have dropped to what they have been in 1986, with 72% of the world's population living in autocracies by 2022. The 2023 Eldeman Trust Barometer found government to be the least trusted institution (50%) compared to businesses (62%) and NGOs (59%).

Amongst the general population, support for Assemblies selected by lottery is high and rising. The 2020 Pew Global Attitudes Survey in France, the UK, the US, and Germany found that, on average, 77% of respondents from the four countries think that it is important for governments to create Citizen Assemblies where citizens debate issues and make recommendations about national laws. The 2021 Sciences Po Political Trust Barometer, covering France, Germany, the UK, and Italy, found that a majority (ranging from 55-71%) think that governments should be obliged to implement recommendations made by Citizens' Assemblies.

Why do Citizens' Assemblies work?

At the heart of a Citizens' Assembly there are three central principles at work.

01. Participation

Participation rights and responsibilities ensure that everybody has both the possibility and the duty to decide on substantive issues. Participation gives people agency and dignity, recognising that everybody is equally worthy and capable of influencing decisions affecting them and their communities.
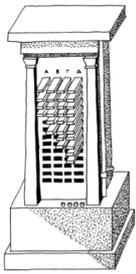
02. Representation by lottery (sortition)

Representation by lottery (sortition) enables equality of political power. It is a fair and equitable way to form a diverse, inclusive, and broadly representative group of people. To organise deep and substantial deliberation, the group of people taking part in it must be relatively small, usually ranging from 35 to 150 members. Randomly selecting citizens, while at the same time ensuring demographically varied composition based on criteria such as age, gender, location, and socio-economic background, has the benefit of capturing the diversity of views, perspectives, and lived experiences of different members of society and ensuring broad representativeness of that community. Inherent to the idea is also **rotation** – that we take turns representing and being represented, since we can't all be involved in all decisions all the time.

03. Deliberation

Deliberation involves dialogue and debate, but also implies inquiry, careful listening, consideration of a range of different arguments and opinions in a respectful way. It requires accurate and relevant information and adequate time, so that those deliberating can get to the core of the issue. It creates the conditions for people to grapple with complexity, tap into collective intelligence, and find common ground. It also provides legitimacy to public decisions in a democratic system.

Examples of Citizens' Assemblies

∨ French Citizens' Assembly on End of Life (2023)

In December 2022-April 2023, 185 people selected by lottery from across France were convened to deliberate on whether France should amend its existing legislation on end of life issues, and if so, how. After deliberating for 27 days during those four months, they reached 92% consensus on around 67 recommendations.

Photo credit: Le CESE

President Emmanuel Macron invited the Assembly Members to receive their

recommendations at the Presidential Palace in April 2023. The citizens concluded that France's existing legislation should be reformed to allow for both assisted suicide and euthanasia. Their recommendations also delve into related details, such as the conditions under which this might be possible, inclusive access, necessary budgetary resources, investment in palliative care, improved conditions for healthcare workers, more research on these issues, and better public information.

President Macron said the citizen Members had "perfected and brought to maturity" the democratic innovation of Citizens' Assemblies. He promised to hold more assemblies to tackle other issues and said he wants their recommendations to form the basis for new legislation to be introduced by the end of summer 2023.

Read more about the Assembly
DemNext reflections on French Citizens' Assembly on End of Life

⌄ Irish Citizens' Assemblies (2012-2023)

In Ireland, Citizens' Assemblies with everyday people selected by lottery have become common practice at the national level for over ten years.

Photo credit: Dara Mac Dónaill / The Irish Times

Some of the most prominent examples include the assemblies on the constitutional issues of same sex marriage and abortion. 100 Citizens' Assembly members recommended the government hold referendums to change the constitution on these issues, and proposed how the legislation should change if people vote for change, which they did in 2018.

Citizens' Assemblies have also been held in Ireland on climate change and gender equality. The programme of the current government has committed to holding four Citizens' Assemblies in its lifetime. Two of these Assemblies are already complete, the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss and the Dublin Assembly. The third Assembly on Drugs Use is underway, with the final Citizens' Assembly to commence in due course.

More about the Assembly

∨ Bogotá's Itinerant Citizens' Assembly (2020-)

In 2020, the Bogotá City Council, through its public innovation lab DEMOLAB, launched an itinerant Citizens' Assembly.

This is an interconnected series of Citizens' Assemblies that is attached to the City Council. Each Assembly involves a different group of people selected by lottery to be broadly representative of the population. The first three Assemblies tackled the question of how to address the main urban planning challenges Bogotá is facing to make it a better place to live. The first Assembly had 110 Members selected by lottery who were focused on identifying the broad objectives. The second Assembly had 60 Members (18 of whom were from the first Assembly, for continuity purposes) who turned those objectives into concrete policy recommendations. The third Assembly was comprised of 70 members, 25 of whom were from the previous Assembly, and it further reviewed and detailed those recommendations.

More about the Assembly

∨ The Ostbelgien Model (2019-)

The Ostbelgien Model combines an Agenda-Setting Citizens' Council with the ongoing use of ad-hoc Citizens' Panels, whose recommendations go on to parliamentary debate.

Photo credit: Ostbelgien Parliament

The Citizens' Council consists of 24 citizens selected by lottery, with an 18-month mandate. It has agenda-setting power, initiating an ad-hoc Citizens' Panel on the most pressing policy issues of its choosing every year. Each Citizens' Panel is comprised of 25 to 50 randomly selected citizens who meet at least three times over three months to develop shared recommendations to parliament. The Citizens' Panels recommendations must go through a parliamentary committee, and the regional parliament is required to debate and respond to the Panel's recommendations.

The issues that have been addressed through this model thus far have included:

- Improving the working conditions of healthcare workers
- Solving the affordable housing crisis
- Improving the system for life-long learning
- Better integrating those with migrant backgrounds into the community
- Strengthening community members' digital skills

The Ostbelgien Model's functioning is underpinned by legislation that was passed unanimously by parliament in 2018. This example inspired other similar embedded deliberative assemblies, such as the Paris Citizens' Assembly and the Citizens' Assembly on Climate in Brussels, both of which are underpinned

by legal texts and function in an ongoing way with rotating Assembly Members.

[More about the Ostbelgien Model](#)

Find more examples:

> ⚭ **OECD Database of Citizens' Assemblies**
> Open external link

Hear from Assembly Members

Everyday people taking part in Citizens' Assemblies report increased understanding of other people's perspectives, deeper understanding of public decision making, stronger efficacy and belief in their capabilities to be active citizens. In many cases it really is a life-changing experience.

Hear from Assembly Members themselves:

> ⚭ **Citizens' Assemblies in Brazil (2022-2023)**
> Open external link

> ⚭ **Irish Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss (2022-2023)**
> Open external link

> ⚭ **French Citizens' Assembly on Climate (2019-2020)**
> Open external link (video in French; click on subtitles - auto translate to choose language)

01
Before the Assembly

1.1 Conditions for success

A successful Citizens' Assembly strengthens public trust, produces reliable outputs that garner legitimacy, and has an impact on public decisions. To run such a process, it is important to set the scene and put in place the conditions for success. This section of the guide lays out the conditions, and chapters that follow provide further details.

Following the OECD Good Practice Principles

The good practice principles for running Citizens' Assemblies have been developed based on analysis of close to 300 examples of Assemblies in collaboration with an advisory group of leading practitioners from government, civil society, and academia. When in doubt, always refer to them as guidance on what constitutes a high quality Citizens' Assembly.

Explore the principles:

1. Purpose

The objective should be outlined as a clear task and is linked to a defined public problem. It is phrased neutrally as a question in plain language.

2. Accountability

There should be influence on public decisions. The commissioning public authority should publicly commit to responding to or acting on Members' recommendations in a timely manner. It should monitor the implementation of all accepted recommendations with regular public progress reports.

3. Transparency

The deliberative process should be announced publicly before it begins. The process design and all materials – including agendas, briefing documents, evidence submissions, audio and video recordings of those presenting evidence, the Members' report, their recommendations (the wording of which Members should have a final say over), and the random selection methodology – should be available

to the public in a timely manner. The funding source should be disclosed. The commissioning public authority's response to the recommendations and the evaluation after the process should be publicised and have a public communication strategy.

4. Representativeness

The Assembly Members should be a microcosm of the general public. This is achieved through random sampling from which a representative selection is made, based on stratification by demographics (to ensure the group broadly matches the demographic profile of the community against census or other similar data), and sometimes by attitudinal criteria (depending on the context). Everyone should have an equal opportunity to be selected as Members. In some instances, it may be desirable to over-sample certain demographics during the random sampling stage of recruitment to help achieve representativeness.

5. Inclusiveness

Inclusion should be achieved by considering how to involve under-represented groups. Participation should also be encouraged and supported through remuneration, expenses, and/or providing or paying for childcare and eldercare.

6. Information

Assembly Members should have access to a wide range of accurate, relevant, and accessible evidence and expertise. They should have the opportunity to hear from and question speakers that present to them, including experts and advocates chosen by the citizens themselves.

7. Group deliberation

Assembly Members should be able to find common ground to underpin their collective recommendations to the public authority. This entails careful and active listening, weighing and considering multiple perspectives, every Member having an opportunity to speak, a mix of formats that alternate between small group and plenary discussions and activities, and skilled facilitation.

8. Time

Deliberation requires adequate time for Assembly Members to learn, weigh the evidence, and develop informed recommendations, due to the complexity of most

policy problems. To achieve informed citizen recommendations, Members should meet for at least four full days in person, unless a shorter time frame can be justified. It is recommended to allow time for individual learning and reflection in between meetings.

9. Integrity

The process should be run by an arm's length co-ordinating team different from the commissioning public authority. The final call regarding process decisions should be with the arm's length co-ordinators rather than the commissioning authorities. Depending on the context, there should be oversight by an advisory or monitoring board with representatives of different viewpoints.

10. Privacy

There should be respect for Members' privacy to protect them from undesired media attention and harassment, as well as to preserve Members' independence, ensuring they are not bribed or lobbied by interest groups or activists. Small group discussions should be private. The identity of Assembly Members may be publicised when the process has ended, at the Members' consent. All personal data of Members should be treated in compliance with international good practices, such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

11. Evaluation

There should be an anonymous evaluation by the Assembly Members to assess the process based on objective criteria (e.g. on quantity and diversity of information provided, amount of time devoted to learning, independence of facilitation). An internal evaluation by the co-ordination team should be conducted against the good practice principles in this report to assess what has been achieved and how to improve future practice. An independent evaluation is recommended for some deliberative processes, particularly those that last a significant time. The deliberative process should also be evaluated on final outcomes and impact of implemented recommendations.

Connection to public decision making

Making sure a Citizens' Assembly will have an influence on public decisions is the most important task. The commissioning public authority, institution, or organisation should publicly commit to responding to or acting on recommendations developed by the Assembly in a timely manner. This includes having early-stage conversations with a range of stakeholders who will be involved in various ways. A successful process often involves securing cross-party or cross-institutional support for the Assembly and keeping relevant civil society organisations and other institutions informed from the start.

Time and resources

Running a Citizens' Assembly requires sufficient time and a dedicated budget.

Typically, at least a **two months** are needed to secure a clear commitment from public authorities and to design the Assembly. It can take a further **two months** to run the lottery process for selecting Assembly Members.
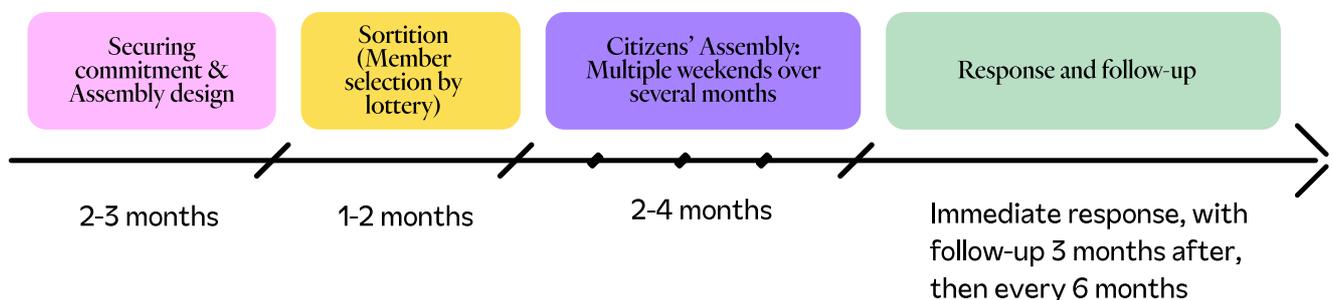
Finally, the deliberation will take **at least four full days, often spread over several months**. Deliberation requires adequate time for learning, weighing up the evidence, and developing informed recommendations, due to the complexity of most policy problems.

The size of budget required will depend on the context, size, and length of the Assembly, ranging from 26.000 USD / 23.000 EUR for a small local level Assembly in Brazil to several million euros for a large national level Assembly in France. A significant part of the budget goes into compensating Assembly Members for their time and hiring skilled facilitators.

Citizens' Assembly budget examples

French Citizens' Assembly on End of Life (2023)	• National level • 185 Members • 27 days of deliberation • Generous communications budget	4.2 mn EUR
Tolosa (Spain) Citizens' Assembly on Emotional Wellbeing (2022)	• Local level • 32 Members • 5 days of deliberation • Includes capacity building • Does not include project team staff costs	217.330 EUR
Petaluma (California, US) Fairgrounds Citizens' Assembly (2022)	• Local level • 36 Members • 12 days of deliberation • Includes interpretation costs • Partially includes project team staff costs	455.000 USD
Francisco Morato (Brazil) Citizens' Assembly on Waste Disposal (2022)	• Local level • 40 Members • 5 days of deliberation • Does not include venue hire	26.000 USD

From a resourcing point of view you will also need to assign a main coordinator or a team (to manage the process), and to tap into diverse competences in the organisation - ranging from communications to project management and expert knowledge of a specific policy area, as well as deploying technical resources such as an online platform or website.

↓ **Assembly Budget Template**
Download XLSX

Breaking down barriers to participation

The main motivation to participate is the commitment by a public institution to take into account of the Assembly's recommendations and use them as a basis for

laws and policies which impact the real world. To ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to accept the invitation, it's important to minimise barriers to participation by:

- Providing financial remuneration or honorariums
- Covering expenses
- Providing or paying for childcare and eldercare
- Choosing an accessible location
- Giving enough information about what being an Assembly Member entails and the time commitment required
- Understanding and addressing local barriers to participation in a specific context

How much should Assembly Members be paid?

The amount depends on the context. Here are a few examples from recent Citizens' Assemblies.

France	87 EUR/day
Mexico	600 MXN/day
United States	160 USD/day
Brazil	20 USD/day

Considerations for and benefits of institutionalisation

To maximise the benefits of Citizens' Assemblies, they have increasingly been embedded into the system of democratic decision-making in an ongoing way. This

means that rather than being one-off initiatives dependent on political will, they become a normal part of how certain types of decisions are taken, often with a legal or institutional basis underpinning their connection to existing institutions like parliaments.

Embedding citizen deliberation in a systemic way makes it is easier and less expensive to organise Assemblies on a range of issues, which can only deepen democratic legitimacy. More Assemblies provide more opportunities for more people to represent others, ultimately giving people more power in shaping decisions. Read more about benefits in <u>section 3.3 of this guide</u>.

When running a Citizens' Assembly, we recommend treating it as a stepping stone towards a larger shift in democracy. Setting up a Citizens' Assembly requires effort and leads to in-depth knowledge as well as increased capacity amongst everyone involved. Use the opportunity to build on it to make a systemic shift towards embedded citizen deliberation.

Even if you are starting with one one-off Citizens' Assembly to address a specific issue, having the intention to make it an ongoing part of decision-making further down the road will help you to capture useful learnings from it. It can help to open up the conversation about how embedded Citizens' Assemblies could be useful in tackling ongoing policy challenges where citizen input is needed regularly.

Keeping in mind the goal of structural change towards embedded, ongoing Assemblies allows the identification of the necessary legal, social, and institutional infrastructure that might need to be created. This could include, for example, changes to regulations to make Assemblies easier to operate, give them more authority, or pay Assembly Members more easily.

1.2 Governance: Setting up the team

The Assembly should have a clear and simple governance structure that ensures transparency and independence. National level Assemblies with longer mandates have more complex governance with elements such as independent guarantors, a chair and others, while smaller and shorter Assemblies have more simple structures. Typically there are a few groups to bring together.

Commissioner

The comissioner is a public authority, institution, or organisation initiating a Citizens' Assembly. It ensures that the Assembly has a clear mandate and its results feed into commissioner's decision-making process. It provides the resources (financial, staff, communications) to run the Assembly.

Operator

The Citizens' Assembly should be implemented by an arm's length organisation separate from the commissioning public authority or institution. This helps ensure the integrity of the process. The operator, with expertise in implementing Citizens' Assemblies, is commissioned to help design the Assembly, recruit Members of the Assembly by lottery, organise the logistics of the Assembly sessions, facilitate deliberation, and prepare the final Assembly report.

An exception here are embedded Citizens' Assemblies - as the commissioner builds capacity and expertise in running citizen deliberation over time, they are able to run a high quality deliberative process themselves, as part of their function. This takes the form of an independent Secretariat that is charged purely with this function.

There are many non-profit and for-profit organisations specialising in running Citizens' Assemblies. It is important to choose one that upholds high quality standards, meeting the OECD Good Practice Principles outlined in this guide.

Some of DemocracyNext's trusted partners are newDemocracy and MosaicLab in Australia, Delibera in Brazil, G1000 in Belgium, MASS LBP in Canada, iDeemos in Colombia, We Do Democracy in Denmark, and Deliberativa in Spain. A longer list of organisations with expertise in Citizens' Assemblies can be found on the Democracy R&D network website.

Project team

The project team is comprised of the representatives of the commissioner initiating the Citizens' Assembly and key people from the operator's team who will implement it.

This group is in charge of the overall process - making sure the Assembly is set for success, has a clear path to impact, and is run on the basis of the OECD Good Practice Principles. They are a bridge between the commissioner and the operator.
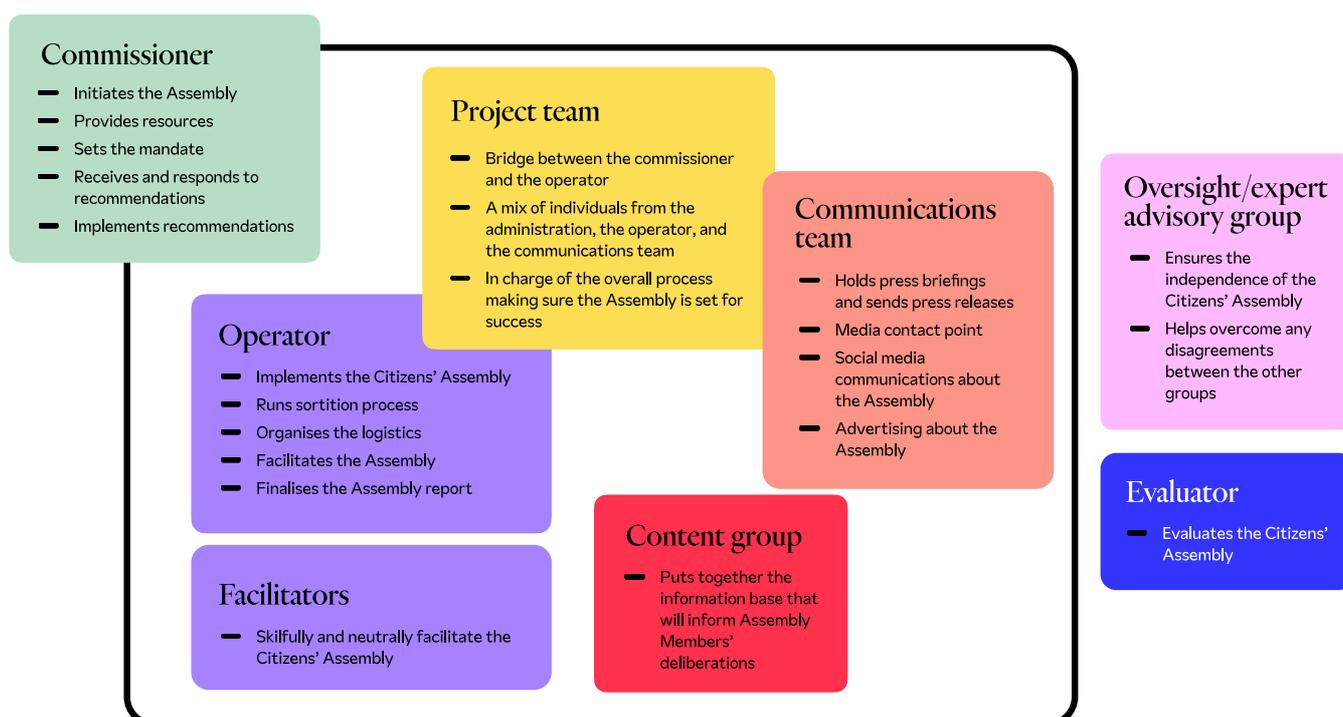
Oversight or expert advisory group

An oversight group ensures the independence of the Citizens' Assembly. For it to be a truly independent source of scrutiny, this role can be undertaken by a university, an independent organisation, or international deliberative democracy experts. The oversight group can help overcome any disagreements between the other groups listed, and acts as an intermediary between the Assembly Members and the commissioner in case of any conflict. This group can also include representatives of different political parties.

Content group

The content group is responsible for putting together the information base that will inform Assembly Members' deliberations, as well as the wider public. The information base should be accurate, broad, relevant, clear, and accessible. This is fundamental for effective deliberation and crucial for ensuring legitimacy of the entire process.

The content group is comprised of experts in the policy issue of the Assembly representing different perspectives and views. Its members are often academics, independent experts, and other relevant stakeholders. The project team establishes the content group. The composition of this group is transparent.

Commissioner
- Initiates the Assembly
- Provides resources
- Sets the mandate
- Receives and responds to recommendations
- Implements recommendations

Project team
- Bridge between the commissioner and the operator
- A mix of individuals from the administration, the operator, and the communications team
- In charge of the overall process making sure the Assembly is set for success

Operator
- Implements the Citizens' Assembly
- Runs sortition process
- Organises the logistics
- Facilitates the Assembly
- Finalises the Assembly report

Facilitators
- Skilfully and neutrally facilitate the Citizens' Assembly

Content group
- Puts together the information base that will inform Assembly Members' deliberations

Communications team
- Holds press briefings and sends press releases
- Media contact point
- Social media communications about the Assembly
- Advertising about the Assembly

Oversight/expert advisory group
- Ensures the independence of the Citizens' Assembly
- Helps overcome any disagreements between the other groups

Evaluator
- Evaluates the Citizens' Assembly

∞ **KNOCA Governance Structures and Practices of Climate Assemblies**
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1.3 Preparing the evaluation

Evaluating a Citizens' Assembly helps policy makers, stakeholders, and the general public trust in the process and the recommendations developed by the Assembly. It will also help to establish what went well and what could be improved next time.

An evaluation process should be initiated early on, before design decisions are made. There are multiple possible methods and approaches to assess a Citizens' Assembly, including surveys, document reviews, interviews, and observation. For longer, national level Assemblies, impact evaluation should be considered as well. For further guidance, see the OECD Evaluation Guidelines for Representative Deliberative Processes.

∞ **OECD Evaluation Guidelines for Representative Deliberative Processes**
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Who evaluates?

It is essential that evaluations are as independent as possible.

1

01. Independent evaluations

Independent evaluations are the most comprehensive and reliable way of evaluating a Citizens' Assembly. They are particularly valuable for Assemblies that last a significant amount of time (e.g. four days or more). These are usually led by academics or specialists who have experience in evaluation methods, expertise in deliberative democracy, and an understanding of what a high-quality public deliberation entails.

A good place to start looking for an evaluator is centres of expertise of deliberative democracy, such as the School of Politics and International Relations at University College Dublin, the School of Geography, Politics & Sociology at Newcastle University, the Department of Political Science at the Pennsylvania State University, and the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance at the University of Canberra.

Depending on your context, you may need a local evaluator who speaks the local language. In such cases an option would be to reach out to the the political science faculty of your local university. Even though it is quite difficult to find a deliberative democracy expert, local political science researchers could consult or be supervised by internationally established experts to conduct an evaluation. The operator you are working with should also be able to recommend relevant academics in your context.

2

02. Self-reporting by organisers

Self-reporting by the project team of the Assembly happens as an open discussion among team members in charge of implementing the process, guided by a set of questions. They reflect on lessons learned and what could be improved next time.

3

03. Self-reporting by Members

Self-reporting by Assembly Members is done by collecting their confidential feedback via surveys and interviews.

⤓ **Sample Assembly organiser questionnaire for Evaluation (Extracted from OECD Guidelines)**
Download DOCX

⤓ **Sample Assembly Member questionnaire for Evaluation (Extracted from OECD Guidelines)**
Download DOCX

What to evaluate?

Evaluation should capture how an Assembly was set up, how it took place, and what impact it had.

∨ Process design integrity

Evaluating the design process that set up the deliberation

– Clear and suitable purpose
– Clear and unbiased framing
– Clear and transparend mandate
– Assembly design aligned with its objectives

- Inclusive process of designing the Assembly
- Transparency and governance
- Representativeness and inclusiveness

∨ Deliberative experience

Evaluating how a Citizens Assembly unfolds

- Neutrality and inclusivity of facilitation
- Accessible, neutral, and transparent use of online tools
- Breadth, diversity, clarity and relevance of the evidence and stakeholders
- Quality of Member judgement
- Perceived knowledge gains by Members
- Accessibility and equality of opportunity to speak
- Respect and mutual comprehension
- Free decision-making and response
- Respect for Members' privacy

∨ Pathways to impact

Evaluating influential conclusions and/or actions of a Citizens' Assembly

- Influential recommendations
- Response and follow-up
- Member aftercare

🔗 **Example of an evaluation report**
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1.4 Designing the Assembly

How to choose the question and set the mandate?

The framing of the issue influences all other aspects of the Citizens' Assembly's design.

The Assembly's question should:

- Have a clearly defined mandate
- Be related to a genuine problem that needs to be solved. Issues that are complex, involve trade-offs without easy yes/no answers, and are underpinned by values-based dilemmas are often well-suited to Citizens' Assemblies
- Be framed in a non-leading, unbiased, clear way, that is easily understandable to anybody
- Make it clear how the recommendations will be used and how the Assembly is connected to the broader political system or decision-making cycle
- Be announced publicly by the commissioners and the project team to ensure accountability and transparency

Other considerations:

- Think about what decisions the Assembly can influence to help solve the problem(s)
- Involve stakeholders in defining the question
- Find the balance between a framing that is too broad to result in useful recommendations and too narrow to miss a chance to generate new and helpful ideas

↓ **Checklist for choosing and wording the Assembly question**
Download PDF

🔗 **KNOCA Guiding Principles for Setting the Remit**
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Who will respond to the recommendations?

You need to decide from the outset who will respond to the recommendations, in order to strengthen ownership, clarity, and commitment. It is often the parliament, the municipal council, a government committee, or the executive team of an organisation.

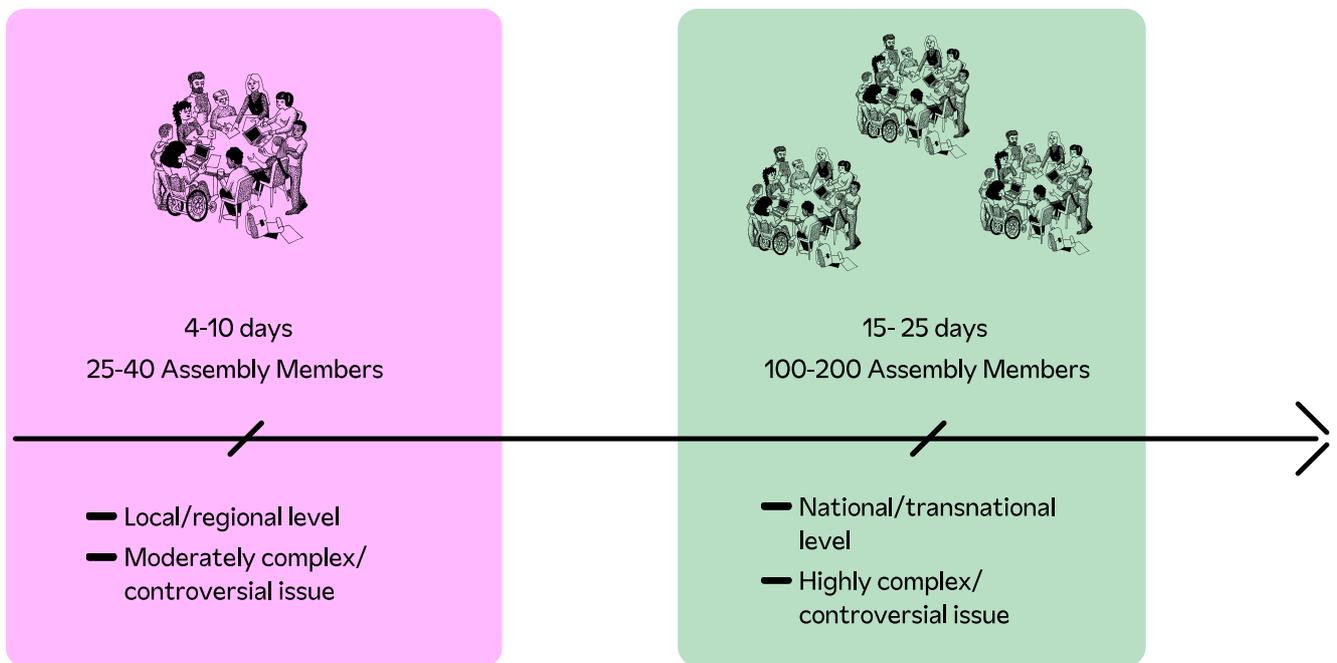## How big and long should the Assembly be?

→ **It depends on the question and the mandate.** The more complex, salient, or controversial an issue is, the bigger the Assembly will be and the more time it will need to deal with issue.

→ **The Assembly needs to capture enough diversity** so that everybody feels that "someone like me" is part of it.

→ **Context matters** - typically local Assemblies are smaller (around 25-40 people), while national, and transnational Assemblies have been bigger (for example Scotland's Assemblies have involved 100 people, national Assemblies in Ireland and France have ranged from involving 100-185 people, and the EU-level Assemblies have involved 200 people).

→ **There is an inherent trade-off between efficiency, deliberative quality, and maximising representation.** More Members means a longer Assembly and more resources, but also greater representation and stronger legitimacy for recommendations.

→ **The more complex an issue, the more time it needs.** The OECD Good Practice Principles recommend a minimum of 4 full days of deliberation (typically 40 hours is a good shorthand). Many smaller or local issues benefit from 6-10 days of deliberation. Many national assemblies have tended to last between 15-25 days. Think about a common sense test: "Would you trust the recommendations of an Assembly on the issue after X amount of time?"

4-10 days
25-40 Assembly Members

15- 25 days
100-200 Assembly Members

- Local/regional level
- Moderately complex/ controversial issue

- National/transnational level
- Highly complex/ controversial issue

When should the Assembly take place?

- Setting dates and times might seem like a logistical question, but getting it wrong can create barriers to participation and exclude some groups
- Usually Assembly sessions take place during the weekend once or twice per month over several months, especially in national or regional Assemblies where Members travel longer distances to participate
- Local Assemblies can take place on a weekend day, since Members don't necessarily need to travel far to join
- When choosing the dates for the sessions, keep in mind not to set them during public holidays and celebrations (including those of minority groups), school holidays, and other culturally relevant considerations

⤓ **Assembly Timeline Template**
Download PDF

Where should the Assembly take place and how to create a deliberative space?

Selecting where a Citizens' Assembly takes place is a fundamental step in ensuring that the process runs smoothly and that Members feel welcome, comfortable, and

empowered.

The spatial conditions of a location can easily enable rich and productive learning, discussion, and deliberation as much as they can hinder it.

→ Consider first where the deliberative process will take place in relation to the wider region or city, making sure it is accessible by public transport and located somewhere that is reachable by all Members of the Assembly.

→ In choosing a specific venue, consider choosing somewhere that is large enough and can be easily adapted for organising the Assembly.

→ Adaptable tables and seating options are essential, as well as wall space for displaying information about the given topic and agreements that have been reached.

→ The space itself should have lots of natural light and should include the right acoustic conditions to allow everyone to hear and be heard in both larger plenary sessions and smaller breakout groups.

→ Ideally this means that the space includes both a larger gathering area with smaller adjacent spaces for deliberation and consensus-building.

→ In traditional government buildings, spaces are organised in a way that doesn't necessarily accommodate people to sit together in smaller, initimate groups to deliberate on a topic. This may not be the best place for an Assembly.

↓ **Spatial Considerations Checklist**
   Download PDF

In what ways should stakeholders be involved in the design process?

Designing a Citizens' Assembly should be a transparent and inclusive process, led by the project team. It should involve in-house or external deliberative democracy experts.

To ensure the Assembly is widely accepted and trusted by public stakeholders, a process should be set up to involve stakeholders representing diverse views when finalising its design. This could be a meeting or a workshop to share and discuss the plans for the Assembly, or an open call for comments.

To address concerns stakeholders might have about handing over any decision-making power to everyday people, the Assembly process should be explained and ways in which stakeholders can contribute beyond the initial design workshop should be made clear. For example, by including them in developing a list of suggested expert speakers.

How to choose the right digital tools?

There are several ways digital tools can be helpful in running a Citizens' Assembly:

→ **Facilitating learning** — to enable Members to access videos and written materials to learn about the policy issue before the Assembly starts and in between the sessions.

→ **Facilitating connection** — to help Members interact, communicate, and build connections and trust in between the sessions and after the Assembly is over.

→ **Supporting facilitation** — during the Assembly they can be used to transcribe and summarise group and panel discussions, draw recommendations, and enable voting for the final set of recommendations.

→ **Following up on the results** — to help Members stay in the loop about the impact of their work.

→ **Engaging broader society** — sharing progress and results of the Assembly, organising other participatory processes that inform the Assembly.

Remember that choosing to use digital tools for Member learning and communication will require support, on-boarding, and providing access to internet and computers or tablets for some Members who may not have access to these facilities.

How to ensure the Assembly is as inclusive as possible?

It is important to ensure equal access to take part in the Assembly for all members of the community.

Find out more:

1. Accessibility

Any person with a disability should be able to reach the Assembly meeting place comfortably and independently, and take part without constraints. Appropriate equipment should be made available during Assembly meetings – such as an induction loop for the hearing impaired, providing a sign language interpreter or additional information on the screen, accompanying voice narration of written text for the visually impaired, among others.

2. Compensation

As highlighted in the Good Practice Principles, people should be paid an honorarium for their time, caring costs and travel and accommodation expenses where relevant should also be covered.

3. Language

Depending on the linguistic diversity of the context in which the Assembly is run, you might need to identify and plan for measures to help Members of the Assembly communicate. These include live interpretation, assigning or allowing Members to bring a paid language buddy who supports them during the process.

What about procurement?

The commissioning authority will most likely need to run a procurement process to select an operator with the knowledge and experience of running a Citizens' Assembly. DemNext has put together a sample procurement document based on our experiences in Europe. MASS LBP has a guide that may be more relevant for North America.

How to involve the wider public beyond the small group of Assembly Members?

It is worth taking time to consider other activities that can open up participation to a wider public - for example, open calls, interviews, or surveys prior to the assembly, to help understand how communities relate to the issue being tackled. This serves a dual purpose of socialising the work of the Assembly, and providing Assembly Members with valuable insight that forms one part of the wider evidence base for their deliberations.

Another way to keep the broader public in the loop is by gathering questions people might have about the Assembly and the issue it is tackling. Assembly members can answer them in short videos that are later disseminated.

How to ensure the communications strategy helps the wider public and decision makers to stay informed about the Assembly?

A dedicated communications strategy and staff time should be budgeted for and set up from the very start, with the aim of informing broader society about the Citizens' Assembly, communicating its progress, sharing evidence and learning materials on a dedicated website to inform the public debate, and raising awareness about the issue tackled and Citizens' Assemblies in general.

Useful ways of spreading the message are:

- Organising press briefings
- Live-streaming Assembly sessions
- Inviting journalists to interview Members
- Disseminating press releases
- Running a social media and outdoor poster campaigns

🔗 **Participo - Communicating About Citizens' Assemblies**
Open external link

How to ensure high-quality and neutral facilitation?

This is one of the most essential criteria for ensuring the Assembly's legitimacy and success. Facilitation is a specific skill that requires training, know-how and experience. A clear and detailed plan should be prepared by the operator's facilitation team that outlines how Assembly Members will go through the process of getting to know one another, learning about the issue they are tackling, deliberating, finding common ground, developing recommendations, and coming to a broad consensus. It should include a mix of work in small groups and plenary sessions.

🔗 **Mosaic Lab: Facilitating deliberation - a practical guide**
Open external link

🔗 **United Nations Democracy Fund: Democracy Beyond Elections Handbook**
Open external link

⬇ **Adapted MosaicLab facilitation plan for 5-day Citizens' Assembly template**
Download XLSX

1.5 The sortition process: Selection by lottery and stratification

How does the selection process work?

A defining feature of Citizens' Assemblies is that Members are selected by lottery to be broadly representative of a community, which means everyone has an equal chance to represent and be represented in turn.

There are two stages to the selection process. In a first stage, a large number of invitations (often between 10-30k) are sent out to a group of people chosen completely at random.

Amongst everybody who responds positively to this invitation, a second lottery takes place.

This time there is a process - known as stratification - to ensure that the final group broadly represents the community in terms of gender, age, geography, and socio-economic differences.

The term for this is sortition. Sometimes it gets referred to as a democratic lottery or a civic lottery.

Stage 1

Invitation sent to a random sample of the population (2.000-30.000) by post, phone, email.

Recipients can volunteer to opt in to the lottery.

Stage 2

Second selection by lottery amongst the volunteers. Stratified based on: Gender, Age, Location, Socio- economic criteria etc.

Final Group: Broadly representative of the community concerned (city, state, country etc.)

	FIDE: Organising a democratic lottery
🔗	Open external link (designed for a European audience)

	MASS LBP: How to Run a Civic Lottery Guide
🔗	Open external link (targeted at North America)

Who should be responsible for selecting Members?

Members are often selected by the operator and this process is overseen by the project team. The operator should have experience running sortition and should lead this process.

Upon which criteria is the group stratified?

Most often, gender, age, location, and another variable that captures socio-economic diversity (such as level of education or type of employment) are used to put together a broadly representative group. On some occasions additional criteria such as language spoken or people's attitudes towards the question tackled is collected and used to make sure different views are represented in the final group. Criteria should also be set for excluding elected politicians, in case they receive an invitation. Adding too many criteria should be avoided, as it makes it complicated to put together a group that can capture them all.

Minimum criteria	Additional criteria	Exclusionary criteria
▬ Gender identity ▬ Age ▬ Location ▬ Education level/ employment type	▬ Language(s) spoken ▬ Attitude toward topic	▬ Elected officials ▬ Public servants working on the issues at hand ▬ Actively campaigning on the issue

Should we oversample the underrepresented?

Traditionally under-represented groups, such as people with lower socio-economic status, young people, those living in rural areas, people disadvantaged by ethnicity, race and in other ways, are less likely to accept the invitation to join the Assembly.

It could be tempting to think that the solution to this problem is to invite people to the Assembly in ways that bypass the sortition process. However, this would create problematic knock-on effects, undermining the principle of everybody having an equal chance of receiving an invitation to be an Assembly Member in the first place. It's important that everybody in the Assembly feels that they are attending by means of the same process - and as members of a shared community.

If some of the group were to receive targeted invitations, bypassing the lottery process, those Assembly Members could feel that they are present solely to represent a specific group or interest, rather than as a community member who has been selected by lottery. We all have multi-faceted parts to our identities, and Assemblies create an enabling environment for people to be able to reflect on the many parts of who they are and not be reduced to one or two aspects of their identities.

So how to nonetheless overcome the issue that certain demographics often have lower response rates to the initial invitation? There are a few options:

→ If it is known in which areas people from these groups live, sending invitation letters to more households in those areas to help ensure that their response rate

can match those of other groups so that they will be well-represented in the final composition of the group.

→ Raising awareness about the opportunity to join the Assembly through targeted outreach efforts by community, governmental, and non-governmental organisations.

→ Working with civil society organisations or community groups that work with underserved communities to distribute more invitations to their members during the first phase of the two-stage lottery process. This means there is some over-sampling that takes place initially, but the second stage of the lottery is still done completely at random, ensuring the final group is broadly representative of the whole community.

→ At the local level, going door-to-door to people who have received an invitation but have not responded and asking them what could be done to enable them to participate is also a tried and tested technique, though time and resource intensive.

> ⌘ **FIDE: Including the underrepresented**
> Open external link

> ⌘ **Door to door outreach**
> Open external link (article in German, auto translate available)

Which data registers should be used?

To send out the first round of invitations, different databases are used depending on availability. These are often the national population registry, voter lists, postal registry, municipal registry, and others. In cases when no database is available, other techniques like random digit dialling or door-to-door recruitment can be carried out. The aim should be to use the most complete list - sometimes a combination of lists - to be as inclusive as possible. Voter registration lists are often poor lists to use on their own for this reason.

Remember to comply with any regulations around the handling of people's personal information throughout, such as GDPR.

What should the invitation letters look like?

Getting the invitation letter right is very important in order to maximise the response rate of those invited.

Invitations should come from and be signed by the person with the most authority to issue the invitation - this could be the president, minister, city council leader, chief executive, or similar.

The letter should provide all necessary information that would enable the recipient to understand the purpose of the Assembly and whether they are able to commit to the full process.

It should include information about:

- The issue and question the Assembly will address
- Who will receive their final recommendations and what will happen after that
- An invitation to put themselves forth for the second lottery to become an Assembly Member
- An explanation about the recruitment process and how to register for the next stage of the lottery
- How the Assembly will unfold
- All the dates on which Assembly Members need to be present
- Remuneration rate (in bold)
- FAQ sheet

The design of the envelope matters - it should strike a balance between looking appealing and inviting, but official enough that people know it is important to open. It is helpful to write the registration deadline on the envelope to catch people's attention. Context also matters. In some countries, it is helpful for the invitation envelope to look like it comes from the government. In other places, the opposite is true and it should be fun and appealing, rather than official-looking.

Poznań Citizens' Assembly invitation envelopes (2021)
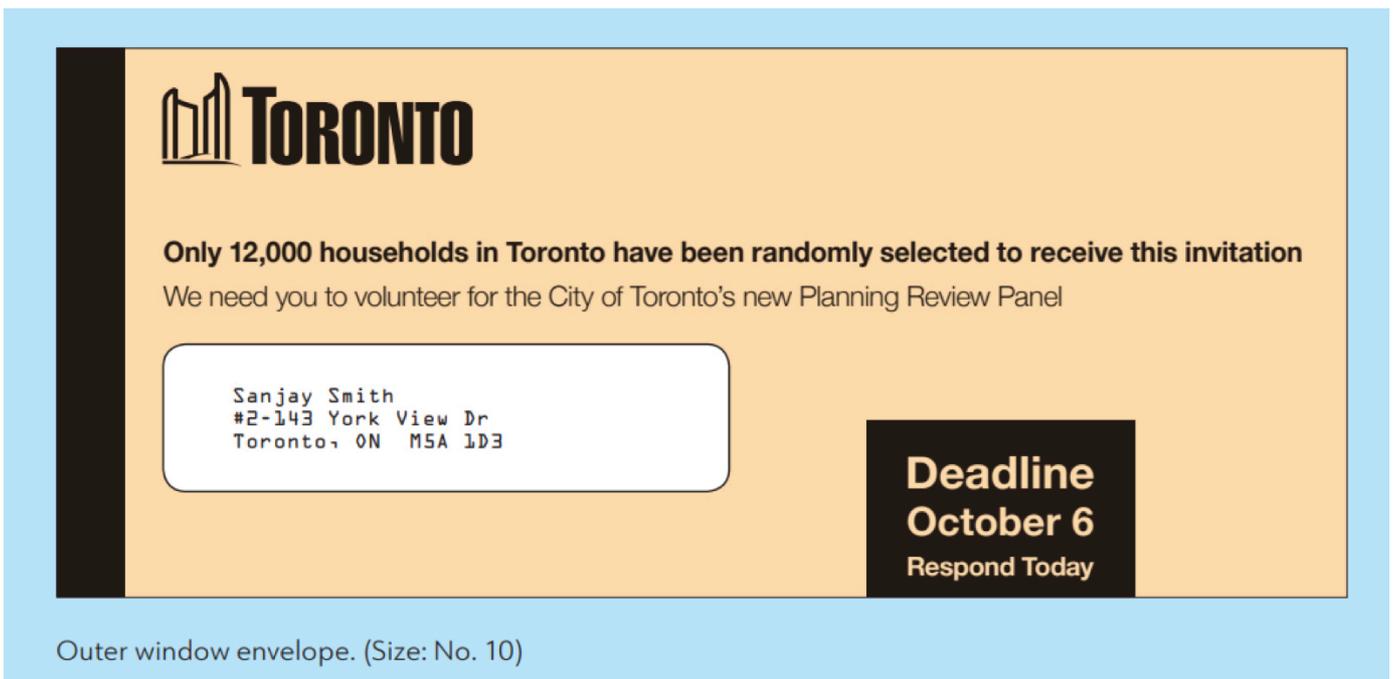
Toronto Planning Review Citizens' Panel invitation envelope (2015)

↓ **MASS LBP Invitation Letter and FAQ Sheet Example**
Download PDF

What should be included on the FAQ sheet?

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet is included with the letter to provide more detail about the process. It gives an opportunity to make potential Assembly Members feel welcome and comfortable. Besides logistical information about the Assembly meetings and clarification of how an Assembly works, it can address practical questions (such as what people are expected to wear, what support is available) and emphasise that there are no special qualifications required to join, everyone is welcome.

How do people reach out with any questions before the Assembly?

It is handy to set up a hotline which potential Members can call to ask any questions, and so that once the Assembly is underway, Members are able to call for help with any issues they might experience. Typically, this is set up by the operator.

How to run the second stage of the sortition process?

Once the list of people who responded positively to the first invitation is available, there are several trusted online platforms with sortition algorithms that can be used to select the final group to be broadly representative of the community. We recommend using one of the following free and open source tools:

– Panelot random selection algorithm
– newDemocracy Stratified Random Selection Tool
– Sortition Foundation StratifySelect algorithm

1.6 Preparing learning and evidence

Assembly Members will bring their lived experience and unique perspectives to the process, but they will need to learn about the policy issue the Assembly will tackle from an accurate, broad, relevant, clear, and accessible information base. This is fundamental for effective deliberation and crucial for ensuring legitimacy of the entire process.

The **content group** is in charge of preparing the information base: a list of experts and stakeholders that Members will hear from and an information kit.

Find out more:

1. Experts and stakeholders

Prepare a line-up of experts and stakeholders representing a breadth of diverse viewpoints. This is important because it builds trust in the process and ensures no one was excluded.

Map out the different dimensions of the issue - from key areas of disagreement or debate, to expert views and lived experience - in order to ensure that all are covered.

Keep in mind the diversity of the experts and stakeholders in terms of gender, minority groups, and other criteria.

Invite experts and stakeholders to present to Members in person, or to record a video presentation. Each of them should have the same amount of time.

2. Information kit

In the information kit **outline the problem, the question, what answers are needed from the Members, the context, the current approach and efforts**.

Write it in **clear, accessible, written in a simple, jargon-free language**.

Include any **background reports** needed to make the decision.

Aim for **50-200 pages** (depending on the complexity of the issue) that explain as much of the problem as possible.

3. Requesting additional experts

Make sure to leave some time for **presentations by additional experts, requested by Members during the Assembly,** in case they feel that some voices were underrepresented.

It is important for Assembly Members to have some influence over the process and be able to call in their own experts and suggest sources of information.

Different ways people learn

People learn and process information in diverse ways. Recent studies show how different people better learn or retain information depending on how they physically interact with it. Sessions where Members deliberate while walking in nature or visually convey their ideas to others are examples of how this can be done.

Treat the line-up of experts and stakeholders and the information kit as the starting point of preparing learning materials and evidence for Members. Also consider including other elements, such as field trips, games, and other ways of interactive learning.

Remember that other kinds of knowledge beyond scientific or experiential - such as embodied knowledge or indigenous knowledge - are welcome, sought out, and valued.

02
During the Assembly
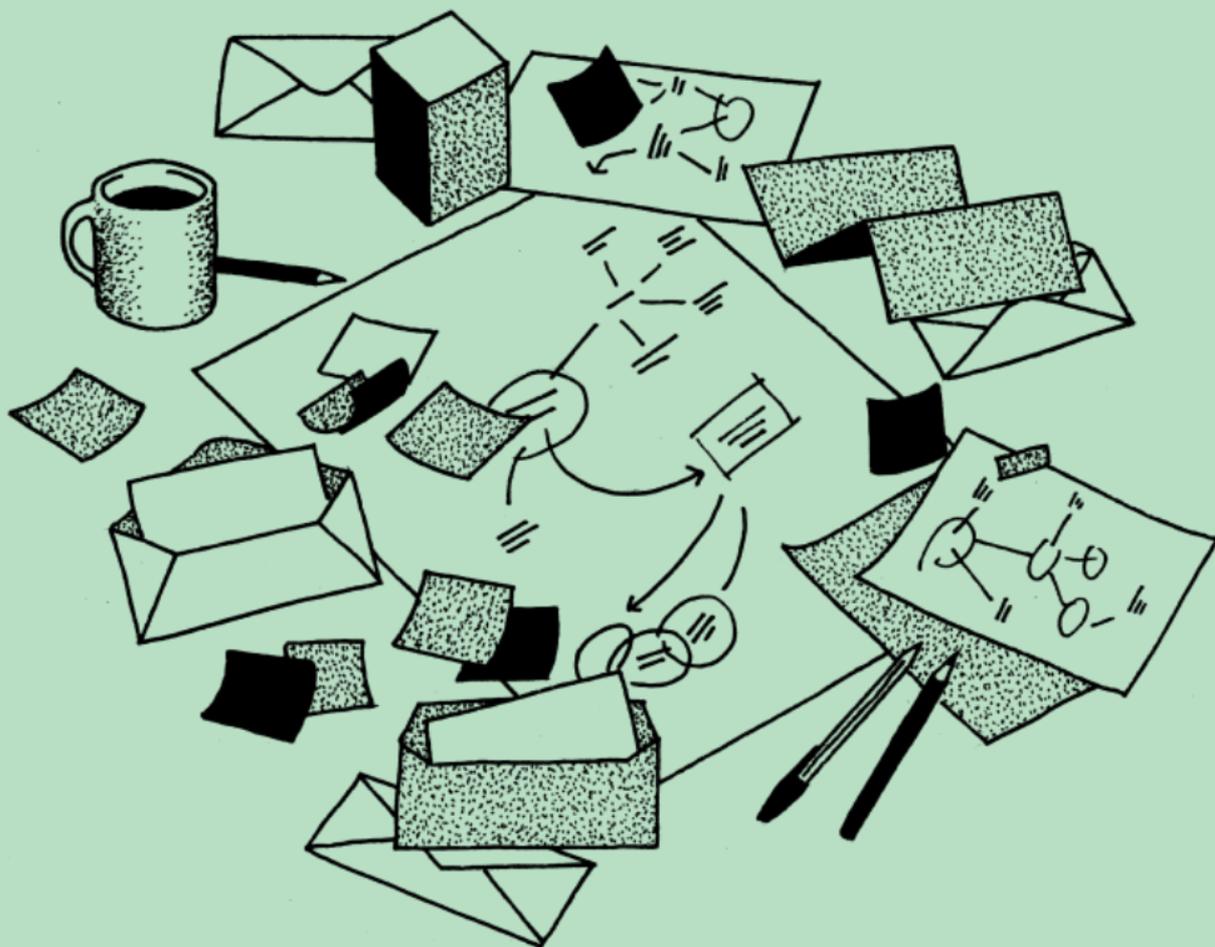
2.1 Onboarding Assembly Members

From the moment someone receives the confirmation that they have been selected as an Assembly Member, to the end of the Assembly, and the follow-up afterwards, they should have the best possible experience and feel welcome throughout.

How to onboard Assembly Members?

→ Once they are selected, **call Assembly Members to confirm their attendance,** give them a chance to clarify any remaining questions, and keep them continuously in the loop about next steps.

→ Before they come together in person, **send Assembly Members further information** about the question the Assembly will tackle, the information kit to read, the agenda of the Assembly meetings, and any logistical information.

→ **Invite Assembly Members to join a virtual platform** where they can learn more about the issue and connect with others.

→ **Organise a time for Members to meet one another** virtually or in person before the Assembly starts to welcome the group. Group-building helps create cohesion amongst the Members and research shows that it helps people to engage better with complexity.

What should Members know about interactions with the press?

Assembly Members, especially those taking part in national level Assemblies, might be approached by journalists or lobbyists. They should be briefed on what to do if this happens: what can and can not be discussed while the Assembly is still ongoing, and what kinds of interactions should be reported to Assembly project team.
When speaking to journalists, Assembly Members should:

- Refrain from predicting any outcomes or speak on behalf of the Assembly
- Be encouraged to speak about their experience and hopes

What helps Members feel welcome when they come together?

For national or regional level Assemblies, where Members come from different parts of the country or region, accommodation is provided. **Host them all together in the same hotel**, where they can exchange and learn about each other during evening social activities or breaks, to help facilitate social interactions amongst the group.

What social activities can help Members build trust?

Social activities help Members get to know each other and foster feelings of trust and respect. This will also help them feel comfortable during deliberation and work more effectively together. **Organise shared meals, active breaks** where Members can meditate, take a walk, or exercise together.

How to help Members feel comfortable in the presence of observers?

Citizens' Assemblies often have researchers, observers, and journalists present for plenary discussions. This can be intimidating for Assembly Members. It is good practice to **give Members a chance to meet the observers** and hear why they are in the room at the outset of the process.

2.2 Facilitating learning and deliberation

Facilitation

Once the Assembly starts, facilitators with expertise in citizen deliberation take Members through the process of learning, deliberation, and finding common ground to develop recommendations. They follow the facilitation plan that has been developed in advance. For further details about the plan, please refer to the Designing the Assembly section of this guide.

Facilitators:

— Are neutral regarding the issue Members are tackling.
— Help make sure all Members have equal chances to speak so that different views and lived experiences are heard.
— Help ensure that any judgements made are based on evidence and careful deliberation.
— Support respectful interactions amongst the group.

New digital tools, like the MIT LVN Platform, can help facilitators capture emerging threads in small group discussions and share people's stories beyond the room.

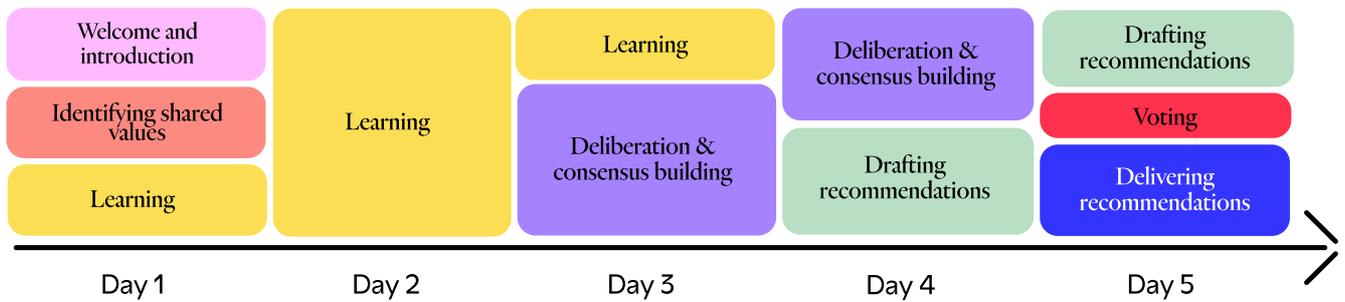🔗 **Mosaic Lab: Facilitating deliberation - a practical guide**
Open external link

⤓ **Adapted MosaicLab facilitation plan for 5-day Citizens' Assembly template**
Download XLSX

How does the Assembly unfold in the room?

| Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 |

Welcome and introduction / Identifying shared values / Learning (Day 1); Learning (Day 2); Learning, Deliberation & consensus building (Day 3); Deliberation & consensus building, Drafting recommendations (Day 4); Drafting recommendations, Voting, Delivering recommendations (Day 5)

Welcome and introduction

At the start of the Assembly, a person with the most authority from the commissioning organisation (the president, minister, city council leader, chief executive, or similar) **welcomes Assembly Members, emphasises the commitment** to implement recommendations the Assembly will come up with, and explains the task and the ask.

The **facilitators introduce the agenda** of the day and start with an ice-breaker designed for Assembly Members get to know each other.

Identifying shared values

Members **decide together on a broadly shared criteria for considering solutions and reaching decisions** - what values guide their decisions. They should also **decide on a list of rules about how they will work with each other**. It is helpful to go back to these in case of disagreements later in the process. This is also Members' first experience of taking a group decision – one that is not directly related to the issue the Assembly will tackle, so it's an opportunity to ease into working together.

⤓ **newDemocracy filling in information gaps and working agreements templates**
Download PDF

Learning
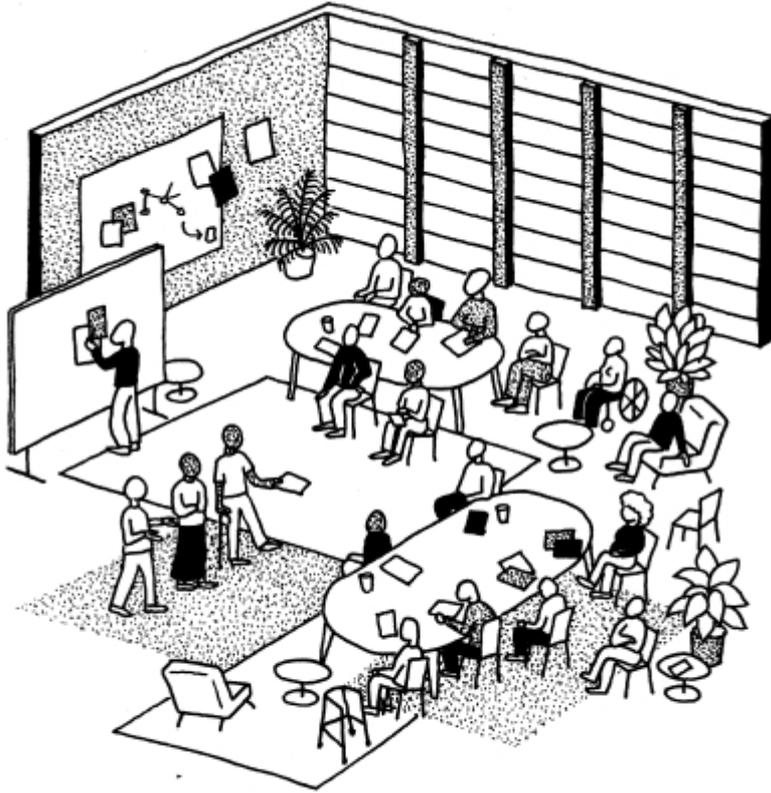
Becoming familiar with the evidence and information about the issue enables Members to slowly build up informed judgement, provides a basis to generate ideas, and develop recommendations. Assembly Members must have enough time and opportunity to question and make sense of the information presented to them, and to critically evaluate it. Techniques like splitting up the information, going through it in groups and reporting back to other Members or questioning experts can allow Members to better absorb it. Members should be asked if they feel there are any gaps in the information and hear from additional speakers to fill in those gaps.

Assembly Members follow the steps of:

- Discussing the information kit
- Hearing from stakeholders and experts
- Developing understanding of the problem and identifying challenges that need addressing
- Identifying any information gaps and requesting additional information and speakers

Deliberation and consensus building

During the deliberation stage, Members generate ideas, listen to the views of others, weigh trade-offs of potential choices, and consider consequences. This is where the diversity of lived experiences comes into play and allows collective intelligence to emerge. **Members discuss the relevant information and consider different options, with an explicit aim of finding common ground and reaching group decisions.**

Innovative practices

Incorporating creative ways to build skills useful for deliberation and open up the imagination of what is possible for Members can contribute to the overall experience and quality of the Assembly. Innovative practices can be:

→ Running a <u>Democracy Fitness Training</u>

→ Developing <u>collective imagining of alternative futures</u>

→ Practising thinking from the perspective of future generations or the natural world (this can be done by assigning some Assembly Members as representatives of these groups)


→ Working with creative practitioners - poets, actors, dancers

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Extending deliberation

Additional time is always appreciated in any Assembly, but if Members feel that there is a strong need to extend the process for another session or a day to allow them to finish their work, such a possibility should be created.

2.3 Drafting recommendations and voting

Collective drafting
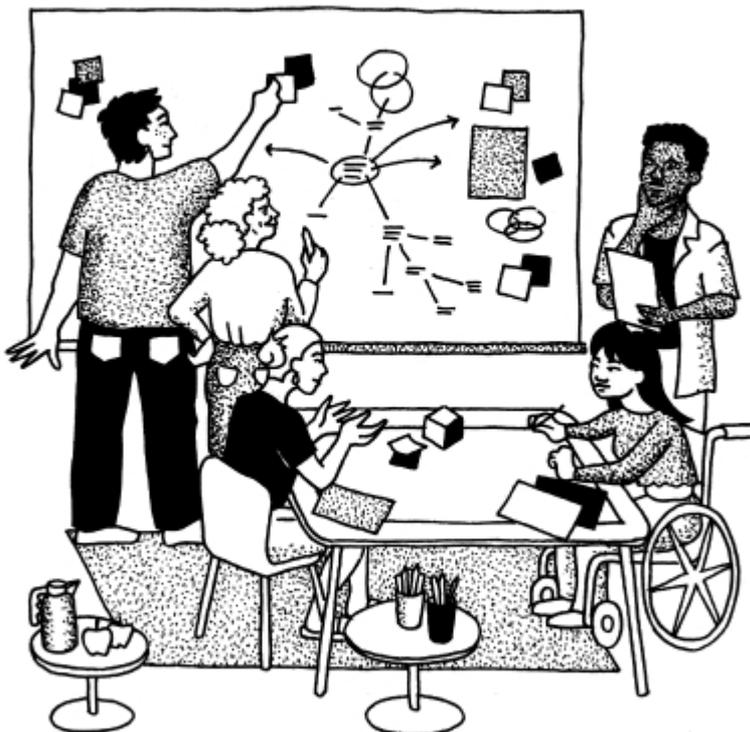
→ **Assembly Members work together to draft recommendations** in an iterative way, returning to them in smaller groups to flesh them out. Several revisions will be needed to come to the final iteration.

→ **All of the recomendations are reviewed collectively** to get a sense of remaining disagreements and possible adjustments that can be made.

→ **A useful practice is to share the draft recommendations with the commissioner** and relevant stakeholders, to ask for feedback on their clarity, and give them the chance to pose clarifying questions. This improves the quality of the final report and the likelihood of impact.

→ In most cases, Members write the final recommendations in their own words. In all circumstances, **Members should always have a final say over the wording of Assembly recommendations**.

Taking a group decision

Once the list of recomendations is complete, Members vote on each recommendation to decide whether it will be included in the final report. **75-80% support is needed for it to make the cut.** It's not about a recommendation being perfect, but whether Members agree on the intent behind them. A simple voting process can be used by raising hands.

Legal support

In some cases, where the recommendations are prepared in the form of legislative proposals, Members have legal support to help translate their recommendations into technical language.

Minority report

When three or more Members have a strong view about a recommendation but it does not gain the required support to be included in the final report, they are able to add a 'minority report' in the form of a short statement. There they explain the recommendation and why they felt it's important.

2.4 Delivering recommendations
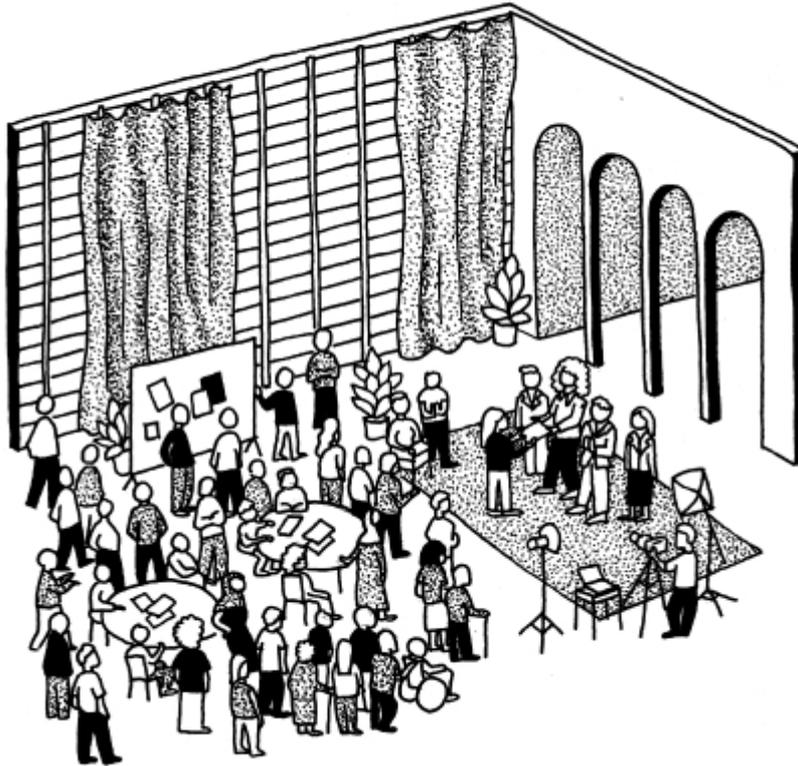
Handover to the commisioning authority

Members present the final Assembly report in person to the commissioning authority. Its representatives should acknowledge the work done by Members, ask any clarifying questions and present the timeline for what happens next. In some cases, this event is open to stakeholders or the broader public.

Acknowledgement of participation

Commissioners can present Members with certificates or some other form of acknowledgement recognising their Assembly Member status and commitment to the process, and to thank them for their hard work.

Sharing publicly

The commissioning authority should make the final report publicly available on their website, issue a press release about it or ideally organise a press conference.
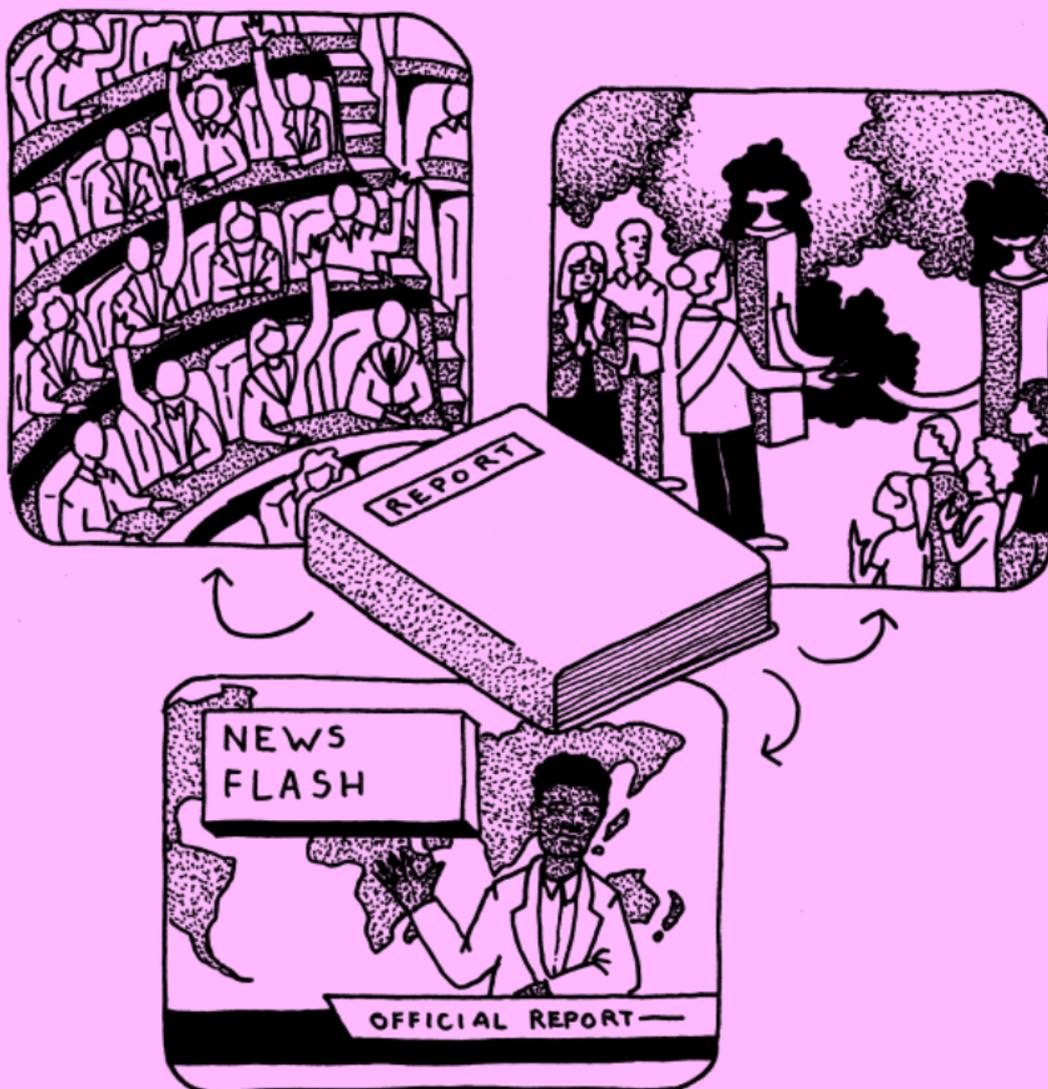
MASS LBP Report examples

Open external link

03
After the Assembly

3.1 Follow-up

Formal response

The commissioning authority should publish a formal public response to the Assembly recommendations, outlining which recommendations they intend to implement and those they will not, with clear justifications as to why, and further details.

Regular follow-up

The implementation of accepted recommendations should be monitored with regular public progress reports. The first one should be timed to occur 3 months after the Assembly, and followed by updates every 6 months after that.

Ways to follow-up

To support and strengthen the follow-up process different solutions can be set up:

→ **A follow-up committee** comprised of randomly selected Assembly Members with a mandate to monitor the implementation of recommendations

→ Tracking the implementation of recommendations via **a dedicted online platform** or database of legal proposals

→ By **involving civil society organisations** to help evaluate the response of the commissioning organisation

Evaluation report

In addition to follow-up on recommendations, the Assembly evaluation report should be made publicly available and communicated.

Broader impact

Beyond the direct result of implementation of recommendations, Citizens' Assemblies can have impact by shaping public discourse and raising awareness about and understanding of a policy issue amongst the wider public, building support for Citizens' Assemblies, opening up alternative visions of the future, and ways of working together.

Here are a few studies that capture examples of such broader impact: increased sense of political self-confidence by Assembly Members and other citizens who heard about it taking place and wider use of Citizens' Assemblies over the long term by public authorities.

3.2 Member aftercare

How to take care of Assembly Members after the Assembly?

For most Assembly Members, coming together with a group of diverse peers to contribute meaningfully to public decision-making is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Assembly Members feel increased capacity for self-expression, deliberation and critical thinking, together with an increased knowledge of and interest in public decision-making. Once the Assembly is over, they should be encouraged to stay in touch with each other, and remain engaged if they choose.

Click on the boxes below to find out more:

1. Staying in the loop

At a minimum, Members should be **kept in the loop about the uptake of their recommendations** and invited to take part in any next steps.

One way to do so is to bring Assembly Members together to review any actions taken on the recommendations they have produced in a year's time.

2. Staying in touch

Project team should **establish communication channels** for Members to be able exchange and stay in touch.

Some operators have set up Citizens' Assemby Member alumni networks to bring the community together regularly.

3. Staying engaged

Members should be **supported if they want to speak about their experiences** and recommendations to their communities or the broader public.

They can also be invited to become volunteers or facilitators at future Assemblies.

Image credit: MASS LBP

3.3 Next steps and institutionalisation

Organising a reflection session

Once the Assembly is over, it is a good time to bring together those involved in commissioning and implementing the Assembly, and other key stakeholders, to reflect on how this experience can enable a larger shift in democracy toward permanent deliberative institutions with citizens selected by lottery at their heart.

In what ways has the process of organising a Citizens' Assembly been useful? How can these benefits be amplified? For what policy issues? How can organisers build on this experience and these learnings? How can they build on this momentum, awareness, and capacity created?

What are the benefits of embedding citizen deliberation?

OECD analysis of examples of standing Citizens' Assemblies has found that making citizen deliberation a regular part of democratic governance has important benefits, such as:

→ **Allowing public decision makers to make better decisions on difficult issues,** as well as more decisions with long-term impacts that require ongoing citizen input (such as on climate change, biodiversity loss, emerging technology, urban planning, infrastructure investment, and other complex issues).

→ **Enhancing public trust.** Public trust has been declining for decades. A one-off Citizens' Assembly can make a difference, but it is the regular practice of public deliberation that gives people and decision makers the opportunity to build mutual trust.

→ **Making Citizens' Assemblies easier and less expensive.** Costs and resources are saved by not starting from scratch every time.

→ **Strengthening society's agency and democratic fitness.** Adding public deliberation and selection by lottery to democracy extends the privilege of representation to a much larger group of people. It also exponentially increases the positive democratic dividend of participation.

→ **Contributing towards the emergence of the next democratic paradigm** with new institutions for governance that give people agency and dignity through participation, the distribution of equal political power through representation by lottery (sortition), and by channelling collective wisdom.

Designing for systemic change

Various designs of standing Citizens' Assemblies have been implemented globally. Similar to designing a one-off Assembly, designing a standing one starts with pinpointing the problem that needs to be solved. Where would ongoing and empowered citizen engagement would be helpful? Have you noticed opportunities as you worked on an ad-hoc Assembly?

Designing a standing Citizens' Assembly includes a range of additional considerations - it requires a deeper analysis of how public decisions are taken in a particular policy area or institution, understanding existing legal and institutional constraints, and working to design the right model of a standing Assembly as well as how it can sustain and evolve.

DemocracyNext specialises in designing such empowered standing Assemblies - get in touch with us to find out more. Our approach is comprised of three steps:

1

01. Understand the context

How are decisions taken at the moment?

Who are the key stakeholders?

What are the existing legal and institutional constraints?

How are citizens involved at the moment?

What are the problems we want to solve with systemic citizen deliberation?

2

02. Co-design the Assembly

What will be the mandate and the functions of the Assembly (agenda setting, evaluating proposals, providing recommendations, follow-up)?

How will the ongoing Assembly ensure representativeness of society?

How it will connect to other institutions and citizen participation initiatives?

3

03. Sustain and evolve

What regulatory/legislative changes can help lower barriers to participation?

What supporting infrastructure and resources are needed to run the Assembly more efficiently and more sustainably?

How will the systemic model evolve and improve in the future?

Infrastructure for permanence

Running a one-off Assembly is a great way to build capacity to organise Citizens' Assemblies in the future, because it helps identify any regulatory or legal improvements that would make it easier to run other processes in the future and begins raising awareness, understanding and support for citizen deliberation. All of these threads can be built on to develop the necessary legal, cultural, and physical infrastructure to embed Citizens' Assemblies in public decision making in a systematic way.

Consider:

→ What regulatory changes are needed that would enable public institutions to initiate citizen deliberation more easily and allow them to give Assemblies a meaningful mandate and decision making power?

→ What laws, regulations or systems need to be improved or created to make it easier to run selection by lottery, compensate Assembly Members for their time, or enable them to take time off work to take part in Assemblies?

→ What existing or new systems could be used to support the follow-up of the implementation of recommendations produced by Assembly Members? For example, could they be registered and trackable on existing bill registers on national, regional, local levels?

→ Where can budget and other resources be secured that is dedicated to citizen deliberation?

→ How can knowledge and expertise how to run Citizens' Assemblies be preserved and transmitted to other public institutions?

→ Are there enough physical spaces that can comfortably host Citizens' Assemblies and support a rigorous deliberation?

04
Resources

For print viewers of this document, please go online to find the following materials: http://assemblyguide.demnext.org/resources.

Download the print version of this guide

⤓ **DemocracyNext Assembling an Assembly Guide**
Download PDF

Download all templates

⤓ **DemNext Assembling an Assembly Guide Templates**

General resources

🔗 **OECD Deliberative Democracy Toolbox**
Open external link

🔗 **OECD Database of Citizens' Assemblies**
Open external link

Before the Assembly

1.1 Conditions for success

	OCED Good Practice Principles for Citizens' Assemblies
🔗	Open external link

	Assembly Budget Template
⤓	Download XLSX

1.2 Governance: Setting up the team

	KNOCA: Governance Structures and Practices of Climate Assemblies
🔗	Open external link

	DemNext Assembly Governance Template
⤓	Download PDF

1.3 Preparing the evaluation

	OECD Evaluation Guidelines for Citizens' Assemblies
🔗	Open external link

	Sample Assembly organiser questionnaire for Evaluation (Extracted from OECD Guidelines)
⤓	Download DOCX

	Sample Assembly Member questionnaire for Evaluation (Extracted from OECD Guidelines)
⤓	Download DOCX

1.4 Designing the Assembly

KNOCA: Guiding Principles for Setting the Remit

Open external link

Checklist for choosing and wording the Assembly question

Download PDF

Assembly Timeline Template

Download PDF

Spatial Considerations Checklist

Download PDF

Request for tenders template for commissioning an operator

Download DOCX

MASS LBP: How to Commission a Citizens' Assembly or Reference Panel Guide

Open external link

Participo - Communicating About Citizens' Assemblies

Open external link

Mosaic Lab: Facilitating Deliberation - A Practical Guide

Open external link

United Nations Democracy Fund: Democracy Beyond Elections Handbook

Open external link

Adapted MosaicLab facilitation plan for 5-day Citizens' Assembly template

Download XLSX

Sunbury Citizens' Panel Facilitation Plan Example
Download PDF

1.5 The sortition process

FIDE: Organising a Democratic Lottery
Open external link

MASS LBP: How to Run a Civic Lottery Guide
Open external link

FIDE: Including the Underrepresented
Open external link

MASS LBP Invitation Letter and FAQ Sheet Example
Download PDF

Panelot Random Selection Algorithm
Open external link

newDemocracy Stratified Random Selection Tool
Open external link

Sortition Foundation StratifySelect algorithm
Open external link

1.6 Preparing learning and evidence

🔗 **NewDemocracy Example of the Info Pack**
Open external link

During the Assembly

2.1 Onboarding Assembly Members

🔗 **How Deliberation Happens: Enabling Deliberative Reason**
Open external link

2.2 Facilitating learning and deliberation

🔗 **Mosaic Lab: Facilitating Deliberation - A Practical Guide**
Open external link

⬇ **newDemocracy filling in information gaps and working agreements templates**
Download PDF

2.4 Delivering recommendations

🔗 **MASS LBP: Assembly Report Examples**
Open external link

After the Assembly

3.3 Next steps and institutionalisation

OECD Report "8 Ways to Institutionalise Deliberative Democracy"

05
Glossary

Collective intelligence

Common ground

Joyful

Agency

Next democratic paradigm

Citizens' Assembly

Deliberation

Complexity

Participation

Citizen power

Representation

Sortition

Collaborative

⌄ Citizens' Assembly

A **Citizens' Assembly** is a group of people selected by lottery who are broadly representative of a community. They spend significant time learning and collaborating through facilitated deliberation to find common ground and form collective recommendations for policy makers, decision makers, and the community.

These Assemblies are sometimes called Citizens' Juries, Panels, or Councils depending on their size and the country where they are taking place.

⌄ Citizens' Assembly Members

Citizens' Assembly Members are people selected by lottery to form a broadly representative group of the community and take part in a Citizens' Assembly.

⌄ Sortition

Assembly Members are selected by lottery to be broadly representative of a community, which means everyone has an equal chance to represent and be represented in turn.

How does the selection process work?

There are **two stages.** In a first stage, a large number of invitations (often between 10-30k) are sent out to a group of people chosen completely at random.

Amongst everybody who responds positively to this invitation, a **second lottery** takes place. This time there is a process - known as **stratification** - to ensure that the final group broadly represents the community in terms of gender, age, geography, and socio-economic differences.

The term for this two-stage process is **sortition**.

Find more details how it takes place here.

⌄ Citizens

We use the word 'citizens' intentionally. We mean the term in the broadest sense of a person living in a particular place, which can be in reference to a village, town, city, region, state, or country depending on the context, rather than in the more restrictive sense of 'a legally recognised national of a state'. We use the word 'citizen' interchangeably with 'people' in our work. We see citizenship as an active practice.

∨ Deliberation

Weighing evidence and considering a wide range of perspectives in pursuit of finding common ground. It is distinct from:

Debate, where the aim is to persuade others of one's own position and to 'win',

Bargaining, where people make concessions in exchange for something else,

Dialogue, which seeks mutual understanding rather than a decision,

and **Opinion giving,** usually witnessed in online platforms or at town hall meetings, where individuals state their opinions in a context that does not first involve learning, or the necessity to listen to others.

OECD (2021), "Eight ways to institutionalise deliberative democracy", *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 12, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/4fcf1da5-en.